FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (c) Hepatitis 'C infection in India has been a public health problem. The infection rate is about 1.5% in the Indian population. The infection is generally transmitted through blood transfusion and other blood products.

Screening of all donor blood for Hepatitis-'C has been made mandatory, which will check spread of this disease very significantly. Spread through sexual contact and contaminated needles is checked if the precautions for spread of Hepatitis-B and AIDS are observed because these three diseases have similar routes of transmission.

Premission for experiments on animals

3911. SHRI MUNAWAR HASAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the R&D activities of pharma companies have come to a stop because of permission not being given for conducting experiments on animals; and

(b) the steps being taken by Government to provide impetus to R&D and permit experiments on animals and prevent the outflow of foreign exchange?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) and (b) The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960 does not prohibit the use of Animate for conducting experiments on animals for bio-medical research. However, certain provisions of the Rules, framed under Section 17 of the Act are adversely affecting Bio-Medical Research. They are enumerated as under:—

(i) Procurement of animals only from registered breeders.

(ii) Not allowing import of animals required for research.

(Hi) Banning contract research.

(iv) Prior permission of CPCSEA needed for all experiment including diagnostic testing activities and time taken in obtaining the permission.

All the issues relating to role of CPCSEA on medical research and amendments to rules, procedures etc. that may be needed, have been taken up with Committee of Secretaries/Ministry of Environment and Forests (CPCSEA).